



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

MAR 18 1998

The Honorable Charles S. Robb
United States Senator
First Union Bank Building
Main Street
Clintwood, Virginia 24228

Dear Senator Robb:

Thank you for your letter dated January 12, 1998, on behalf of your constituent, C. Richard Farthing, County Administrator, Tazewell County, concerning the placement and construction of facilities for the provision of personal wireless services and radio and television broadcast services in his county. Your constituent's letter refers to three proceedings that are pending before the Commission. In MM Docket No. 97-182, the Commission has sought comments on a Petition for Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making filed by the National Association for Broadcasters and the Association for Maximum Service Television. In this proceeding, the petitioners ask the Commission to adopt a rule limiting the exercise of State and local zoning authority with respect to broadcast transmission facilities in order to facilitate the rapid build-out of digital television facilities, as required by the Commission's rules to fulfill Congress' mandate. In WT Docket No. 97-192, the Commission has sought comment on proposed procedures for reviewing requests for relief from State and local regulations that are alleged to impermissibly regulate the siting of personal wireless service facilities based on the environmental effects of radio frequency emissions, and related matters. Finally, in DA 96-2140 and FCC 97-264, the Commission twice sought comments on a Petition for Declaratory Ruling filed by the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association seeking relief from certain State and local moratoria that have been imposed on the siting of commercial mobile radio service facilities.

Because all of these proceedings are still pending, we cannot comment on the merits of the issues at this time. However, I can assure you that the Commission is committed to providing a full opportunity for all interested parties to participate. The Commission has formally sought public comment in all three proceedings and, as a result, has received numerous comments from State and local governments, service providers, and the public at large. Your letter, as well as this response, will be placed in the record of all three proceedings and will be given full consideration.

At the same time, the Commission is actively pursuing initiatives that we hope will render any Commission action limiting State and local authority unnecessary. Commission staff, working with the Commission's Local and State Government Advisory Committee, is bringing together representatives of industry and municipal governments to discuss mutually acceptable solutions to the challenges posed by facilities siting. Chairman Kennard has stated that preemption of local zoning authority should be a remedy of last resort, and that the Commission should not consider preemption until the possibilities for constructive dialogue have been exhausted.

Further information regarding the Commission's policies toward personal wireless service facilities siting, including many of the comments in the two proceedings involving personal wireless service facilities, is available on the Commission's internet site at <http://www.fcc.gov/wtb/siting>.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely,



for Steven E. Weingarten
Acting Chief, Commercial Wireless Division
Wireless Telecommunications Bureau

cc: CWD

Dockets (2)

John Conwell

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CHARLES S. ROBB
VIRGINIA

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JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
Vice Chairman
Democratic Policy Committee

January 12, 1998

WTB
97-182
915

Ms. Judith L. Harris
Director, Office of Legislative Affairs
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW, Room 808
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Ms. Harris:

Enclosed is correspondence relating to an inquiry that was forwarded to your office. As my files do not reflect a response, it would be helpful if you would advise me on the current status of this case.

If no action has been taken, I would greatly appreciate your assistance in expediting this matter. Please respond directly to my office at the address listed above.

In your reply, please refer to Mr. C. Richard Farthing.

Again, thank you for any assistance you might provide.

Sincerely,



Charles S. Robb

CSR/jfo
Enclosure

Washington Office:

Russell Senate Office Building
First and Constitution Avenue, NE
Room 154
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4024

State Office:

The Ironfronts, Suite 310
1011 East Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 771-2221

Regional Offices:

Dominion Towers, Suite 107
999 Waterside Drive
Norfolk, VA 23510
(757) 441-3124

Signet Bank Building
530 Main Street
Danville, VA 24541
(804) 791-0330

Greater Bank Building
310 First Street SW, Suite 102
Roanoke, VA 24011
(540) 986-0103



Tazewell County Virginia

"Bound For Progress"

Jerry Wood, Vice Chairman
Wilma Sayers, Supervisor

Donald Payne, Supervisor
Robert J. Wade, Supervisor

James H. Jones, Chairman
C. Richard Farthing, County Administrator

October 28, 1997

The Honorable Charles S. (Chuck) Robb
U.S. Senator
Southwest Office, Attn: Jim O'Quinn
Regional Representative
First Union Bank Bldg., Main Street
Clintwood, Virginia 24228

The Honorable John W. Warner
U.S. Senator
Abingdon Office, Attn: Cathie Gollehon
235 Federal Building
180 West Main Street
Abingdon, Virginia 24210

The Honorable Frederick C. (Rick) Boucher
U.S. Congressman
Abingdon District Office, Attn: Becky Coleman
188 East Main Street
Abingdon, Virginia 24210

Dear Senator Robb, Senator Warner and Congressman Boucher:

We are writing you about the Federal Communications Commission and its attempts to preempt local zoning of cellular, radio, and TV towers by making the FCC the "Federal Zoning Commission" for all cellular telephone and broadcast towers. Both Congress and the courts have long recognized that zoning is a peculiarly local function. Please immediately contact the FCC and tell it to stop these efforts which violate the intent of Congress, the Constitution and principles of Federalism.

In the 1996 Telecommunications Act, Congress expressly reaffirmed local zoning authority over cellular towers. It told the FCC to stop all rulemakings where the FCC was attempting to become a Federal Zoning Commission for such towers. Despite this instruction from Congress, the FCC is now attempting to preempt local zoning authority in three different rulemakings.

Cellular Towers - Radiation: Congress expressly preserved local zoning authority over cellular towers in the 1996 Telecommunications Act with the sole exception that municipalities cannot regulate the radiation from cellular antennas if it is within limits set by the FCC. The FCC is attempting to have the "exception swallow the rule" by using the limited authority Congress gave it over cellular tower radiation to review and reverse any cellular zoning decision in the U.S. which it finds is "tainted" by radiation concerns, even if the decision is otherwise perfectly permissible. In fact, the FCC is saying that it can "second guess" what the true reasons for a

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municipality's decision are need not be bound by the stated reasons given by a municipality and doesn't even need to wait until a local planning decision is final before the FCC acts.

Some of our citizens are concerned about the radiation from cellular towers. We cannot prevent them from mentioning their concerns in a public hearing. In its rulemaking the FCC is saying that if any citizen raises this issue that this is sufficient basis for a cellular zoning decision to immediately be taken over by the FCC and potentially reversed, even if the municipality expressly says it is not considering such statements and the decision is completely valid on other grounds, such as the impact of the tower on property values or aesthetics.

Cellular Towers - Moratoria: Relatedly the FCC is proposing a rule banning the moratoria that some municipalities impose on cellular towers while they revise their zoning ordinances to accommodate the increase in the numbers of these towers. Again, this violates the Constitution and the directive from Congress preventing the FCC from becoming a Federal Zoning Commission.

Radio/TV Towers: The FCC's proposed rule on radio and TV towers is as bad: It sets an artificial limit of 21 to 45 days for municipalities to act on any local permit (environmental, building permit, zoning or other). Any permit request is automatically deemed granted if the municipality doesn't act in this time frame, even if the application is incomplete or clearly violates the local law. And the FCC's proposed rule would prevent municipalities from considering the impacts such towers have on property values, the environment or aesthetics. Even safety requirements could be overridden by the FCC! And all appeals of zoning and permit denials would go to the FCC, not to the local courts.

This proposal is astounding when broadcast towers are some of the tallest structures known to man - over 2,000 feet tall, taller than the Empire State Building. The FCC claims these changes are need to allow TV stations to switch to High Definition Television quickly. But *The Wall Street Journal* and trade magazines state there is no way the FCC and broadcasters will meet the current schedule anyway, so there is no need to violate the rights of municipalities and their residents just to meet an artificial deadline.

These actions represent a power grab by the FCC to become the Federal Zoning Commission for cellular towers and broadcast towers. They violate the intent to Congress, the Constitution and principles of Federalism. This is particularly true give that the FCC is a single purpose agency, with no zoning expertise, that never saw a tower it didn't like.

Please do three things to stop the FCC: First, write new FCC Chairman William Kennard and FCC Commissioners Susan Ness, Harold Furchtgott-Roth, Michael Powell and Gloria Tristani telling them to stop this intrusion of local zoning authority in cases, WT 97-197, MM Docket 97-182 and DA 96-2140; second, join in the "Dear Colleague Letter" currently being prepared to go to the FCC from many members of Congress; and third, oppose any effort by Congress to grant the FCC the power to act as a "Federal Zoning Commission" and preempt local zoning authority.

The following people at national municipal organizations are familiar with the FCC's proposed rules and municipalities' objections to them: Barrie Tabin at the National League of Cities, 202-626-3194; Eileen Huggard at the National Association of Telecommunications